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ABSTRACT

An innovative approach to the preparation of school administrators is described in which instructor and student come together in a learning situation that integrates three core components: (1) formative portfolio assessment; (2) reflective practice; and (3) cognitive apprenticeship. The operation and impact of this approach are illustrated through its implementation in a graduate administrator preparation program at Oakland University in Rochester (Michigan) involving 17 students in 3 cohort teams. Qualitative ethnographic research methods were used to document the experiences of these graduate students in the cognitive coaching process, with a focus on the contents of their formative professional development portfolios and their accompanying reflective papers. Analysis of the data revealed deepening understanding, creation of meaning, and integration of metacognitive analysis, as well as enhanced linkage of theory and practice. Students became more open to exploration of complex problems of practice and reaffirmed themselves as developing leaders. Appendixes contain sample portfolio documentation and a list of proficiencies of the effective principal. (Contains 15 references.) (SLD)

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INTEGRATING FORMATIVE PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT, REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND COGNITIVE COACHING INTO PRESERVICE PREPARATION

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Integrating Formative Portfolio Assessment, Reflective Practice and Cognitive Coaching into Preservice Preparation

New approaches to preparation for professional practice are being developed in many fields -- medicine, business, law and school administration. What they share is their commitment to develop practitioners who can demonstrate performance excellence and thoughtfulness--not automatic behavior derived from other contexts and simpler times, practitioners who can master ever larger knowledge bases; confront and analyze complex problems; develop requisite skills to consider alternate solutions; decide and implement their selected choices thoughtfully and effectively; and execute these operations over time in increasingly complex, dynamic environments.

This paper describes an innovative approach to the preparation of school administrators in which instructor and student come together in a learning situation which integrates three core components: formative portfolio assessment, reflective practice and cognitive apprenticeship. The operation and impact of this approach are described, and implications for the redesign of professional preparation programs are considered.

Formative Portfolio Assessment

One significant approach receiving increasing attention in professional development programs is that of portfolio assessment. Borrowing from fields with long histories of portfolio assessment--notably in the visual and musical arts, and more recently in K-12 education, portfolio assessment is being recognized as a powerful tool by which students can select and compile multi-faceted evidence of performance and growth.

A unique feature of a portfolio when it is used measure student growth is that it is both a physical and philosophical concept (Valencia, 1990). As a physical entity, a portfolio is a container, in which the artifacts of student performance can be stored --the examples, documents, and observations that serve as evidence of growth and development. Such artifacts can be infinitely diverse in format and can include anything that documents student learning and applications outside of the classroom--writings, computer programs, audio or video tapes, letters, articles about accomplishments, reflective statements concerning personal and professional growth. Thus, a portfolio can be a limitless opportunity for students to display in one collection evidence of what they know, think, and are able to do.

As a concept, the idea of a portfolio forces us to expand the range of options we would consider as data to use in evaluating student growth and making instructional decisions. It represents an attitude suggesting that assessment is a dynamic rather than a static process, reflected most accurately in multiple snapshots taken over time. It allows us to define achievement in broad, diverse, adaptive, multidimensional terms rather than narrow restrictive ones. Thus, a portfolio provides a complex and comprehensive view of student performance that encourages us to look at learning

as a complex and multidimensional process. Different from traditional methods of assessment, the portfolio offers the opportunity to observe students in a broader context: taking risks, developing creative solutions, and learning to make judgments about their own performance (Hutchings and Marchese, 1990).

Portfolio assessment accords with one of the key principles of adult learning--the importance of drawing on students' lived experiences and providing opportunities for independence, self-direction and personal control of learning. Through the process of building a portfolio, the student operates as the active agent of the process, not the receiver, as a participant in the process. rather than an object of such a process. Lodging responsibility for the selection and evaluation of worth of such evidence with the student places ownership of the development of professional judgment and expertise with the learner. Through the gathering of ongoing evidence of growth over time based on actual performance, the learner is provided with opportunities to monitor the development of his/her own professional mastery. Further, since portfolio assessment is grounded directly in practice, it is more authentically related to the complexity of real schools. By being "situated" or "contextualized" in this way, it more accurately measures leadership behaviors and activities that take place in actual school settings.

The portfolio process can thus enhance educational leadership development by providing an opportunity for students to document their leadership behaviors over an extended time span in any number of ways: chairing a school improvement committee; conducting a staff development activity; making oral or written presentations; speaking before a board of education or other public body; or designing a new instructional program. Used in this way, the portfolio acquires importance as an instrument of development, of formation over time.

It is precisely this developmental perspective that enhances the value of the formative portfolio assessment process. Unlike a single test score, which represents one piece of information at a particular moment in time, this approach is a continuous, longitudinal, dynamic process, affording students an opportunity to consider what was, and to ponder growth over time. It encourages students to view learning as an incrementally staged process, with concrete benchmarks for their own progress. It recognizes that the learner and the task change with every new situation, that knowledge is cumulative and transferable, and that the basis for future learning comes precisely from growth in understanding, from practice, and from integration of knowledge over time. This can have a cumulative positive effect on student learning and motivation, and can serve the psychological needs of adult learners by providing physical evidence of their own growth.

To enhance the use of the portfolio as a tool of formative assessment, review sessions can be scheduled between student and instructor at periodic intervals--perhaps once per semester. On such occasions, both partners can come together for the purpose of reviewing the portfolio contents, paying attention to their quality and quantity, and the desirability of adding other materials that would prove useful as evidence of applied learning and understanding. This partnership can move the student from a state of reliance on others to a state of independence in making judgments about real problems and personal abilities. It is precisely such independence that will be called upon in practice, when the world of the student is left behind for that of the professional administrator.

The addition of just the formative portfolio assessment process alone during the entire course of studies could enhance administrator preparation programs, expanding opportunities to shape desired administrator behaviors and skills, strengthening the collaborative process between student and instructor, and deepening the link between theory and practice. Linked with reflective practice, the formative portfolio assessment process gains even greater significance.

Reflective Practice

Almost 20 years ago, Argyris and Schon (1974) observed that people's ideas about how things work, their "theories of action" were central to their effectiveness as leaders. To become more effective school reformers, administrators needed to learn not simply new skills, but new "theories of action". In 1983 and 1987, Schon concluded that skilled practitioners were reflective practitioners, using their experience as a basis for assessing and revising existing theories of action to develop more effective action strategies. The concept of reflective practice--the mindful consideration of one's professional actions--has had enormous impact on professional development programs. Beginning with the single premise that ideas shape action, new questions and ideas have unfolded about the nature of professional knowledge and about how professionals learn.

Reflective practice stems from the learning theories of Dewey and Piaget, which hold that learning is dependent upon the integration of experience with reflection, and of theory with practice. It operates as a dialectic process in which thought is integrally linked with action. When faced with a problem, a discrepancy between the real and the ideal, or between what occurred and what was expected, the reflective practitioner steps back and examines his actions and the reasons for his actions.

> Experience provides the basis for learning. . . An event occurs. The person must make meaning of that event, examine it, appraise it; out of this comes new perspectives, the basis for experimentation. Reflection is the essential part of the process that makes it possible to learn from experience.
>
> Osterman (1990).

Through this dialectic process of moving from theory to practice and back again to theory, the practitioner takes an active role in shaping his own professional growth, not merely developing new ideas of theories of action, but eliminating or modifying those old ideas that have been shaping behavior. Thus, through the integration of knowledge and action through thought, reflective practice can alter understanding and behavior, and help practitioners improve their practice.

Reflective practice also contains a powerful critical component, moving the practitioner to subject his own actions to critical assessment, challenging him to question beliefs and behaviors which preserve an inadequate current system and block reform. Further, reflective practice makes explicit what practitioners often do not talk about. It permits the unconscious thoughts, assumptions and patterns that guide actions to be raised to a conscious level; it facilitates the articulation of how knowledge, thought and action are integrated, and promotes dialogue among practitioners and the sharing of experiences. In these ways, reflective practice can

contribute to professional growth and to the development of a sense of community. Cambron-McCabe (1993) stresses the importance of informing administrative practice by critical reflection--reflection situated in the cultural, political, and moral context of schooling (p. 162). Since schools are sites of cultural conflict, it is imperative for school administrators to understand how in their official roles as leaders they have both the authority and the responsibility to examine the existing structures, practices and tensions in the school, and to work on behalf of the advancement of a just and democratic school environment. Educating for leadership must not lead to mere management, but to a thoughtful clarification and consideration of what is in schools--and what ought to be.

Integrating both reflective practice and formative portfolio assessment in an administrator preparation program can further the development of such leaders. Grounding the focus of professional formation in a thoughtful analysis of problems of practice--the real issues and challenges presented in schools--students can develop a deeper understanding of the true responsibilities of their future role in ways not possible with traditional instructional methods.

Thus, such an approach can serve both a critical and metacognitive function, helping students develop their capacity for self-reflection and judgment within a moral context framed by beliefs, purposes and values.

> Students don't just put material into a portfolio; they reflect upon the material: what they learned, what the material demonstrates, why they are placing it in the portfolio, and how it compares with prior samples. Thus, the portfolio encourages students to develop a set of values, to assess their work according to those values, and to reflect in new ways on their learning and performance. It is these very qualities of reflective practice which distinguish true educational leaders from managers or technicians.
>
> Paulson (1990).

Thus, reflective practice linked to formative portfolio assessment can serve as a valuable contribution to the development of future school leaders. Theory and practice can be contextualized by reference to actual leadership behaviors in schools, and a critical stance can be exercised in pursuit of educational reform. The integration of a third component--cognitive apprenticeship--can raise even this model of graduate professional training to a higher level of effectiveness and power.

Cognitive Apprenticeship

> The role of the instructor is that of mentor, coach, experienced practitioner and supportive advocate, providing feedback and detailed diagnoses of strengths and weaknesses, and opportunities for guided practice. In addition, these occasions may be considered a cognitive apprenticeship, during which specific decision-making and problem-solving processes used for actual school-related issues are made explicit.
>
> Prestine & LeGrand (1990).

The work of Prestine & LeGrand describes the implications of new perspectives on learning theory derived from cognitive psychology, as applied to the preparation of educational administrators. These perspectives affirm the critical importance of situated knowledge or situated cognition as a condition for learning, stressing the power of the linkage between culture and cognition, and the social construction of knowledge as facilitated by collaborative social interaction.

The core concept of the cognitive apprenticeship model is that the strategic methods and knowledge employed, the cognitive and metacognitive processes used by "experts" to handle complex tasks are made explicit. Usually these processes are carried out internally and remain hidden to outside observers. Externalizing expert cognitive processes and situating learning in a variety of contexts of use helps the learner gain a fuller understanding of abstract, conceptual knowledge and establishes deep connections between such knowledge and problem-solving contexts (p. 2.).

The cognitive apprenticeship approach builds on the traditional apprenticeship model, by which an individual who wished to become professional worked under a qualified practitioner (master) and learned primarily by observation, discussion and imitation. New knowledge was acquired and made meaningful through "mind to mind contact"--from expert to novice, within the actual context of practice. Unlike the technical-rational approach which operates didactically in the lecture hall, the cognitive learning approach is active (as opposed to passive), social (collaborative, cooperative) and authentic (enculturated). Situated in context, it is holistic and interactionist, linking teacher and student, learning and action, theory and practice.

In this model, the instructor becomes expert and cognitive coach focused on problems of practice. Step by step, the process of defining, framing and solving problems is articulated. Alternative options are examined; the basis for selection of the preferred choice is explicated; the influence of belief and value systems is clarified; and the role and integration of theoretical knowledge in the decision-making process are explained. Thus, the primary instructional responsibility involves coaching students through the process of thinking about problems of practice. This approach represents a shift in graduate professional training toward problem-based learning. Bringing together expert and student in a shared process of critical reflection--examining what has been done, what might have been done, and how improvement could be furthered--the process of cognitive apprenticeship, or cognitive coaching seeks to produce superior capacities for knowledge application, transfer and use in the solving of real problems of practice.

Implementing the Cognitive Coaching Process

The instructional design described in this paper was implemented over a period of three years in a graduate administrator preparation program at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. The author served as program coordinator, student advisor and professor, and worked with cohort teams of approximately 15 students during the entire two years of the program. The process of formative portfolio development, reflective practice and cognitive coaching was integrated into the entire formation

process of three cohort teams. The experiences with those three teams served as the basis for this research.

Students were led into the process of cognitive coaching through a series of sequenced new learnings. First, students were introduced to the process of formative portfolio assessment. Extensive readings were provided and several class discussions held to provide clear understanding of the purpose, dimensions and design of a formative portfolio. Special attention was paid to the learnings and professional growth students experienced outside the university classroom. In preparing to develop their portfolio, students were presented with written directions as follows:

> As you begin your formal studies in the field of school administration and leadership, you are initiating a process of professional and personal growth. Much of what you learn will take place in the classroom. There you will clarify your readings with your team members and instructors, and gain new understandings from your sharing of experiences.
>
> You will also contribute to your own development in other settings outside of the classroom--in your building or district; through presentations and leadership activities concerning various aspects of school improvement; and at conferences with professional colleagues from around the state or nation. All such experiences will be part of your preparation as an educational leader, and all will provide opportunities for your documentation and reflection.
>
> Just as portfolio assessment has emerged as one of the most powerful means of measuring the growth of students in grades K-12, so does it offer promise of enhancing the professional development of adults. The experience of documenting one's own activities and considering their meaning as part of one's total growth places responsibility where it most properly lies--with the learner. Further, portfolio assessment permits inclusion of experiences ranging far beyond those possible within the space and time confines of the classroom.
>
> Your portfolio is, therefore, a means for you to gather evidence of your development of professional administration and leadership skills, and to reflect upon your growth. By the end of your two years of study, your collection of documents and reflective papers will confirm for you and others the richness of your new level of leadership abilities.

To guide students in documenting their out-of-school professional development activities, a cover sheet for their portfolio was provided (see Appendix A). Students were directed to list their entries by numbering the document, describing the nature of the activity, date of the activity, audience involved, and key leadership skill involved in each document. A listing developed by The Connecticut Principals' Academy identifying key administrative proficiencies was used to help students identify and categorize their leadership behaviors (see Appendix B). Organized around the major domains of <u>leadership</u>, <u>human relations</u> and <u>management</u>, the listing described and specific behaviors and presented them by number. This served

as a convenient and manageable organizing tool to assist students as they reinterpreted their in-school activities to specific leadership proficiencies.

Secondly, students were introduced to the concepts of reflective practice, and led through several experiences of reflective writing. These included an initial statement of their personal educational platform (which they continued to develop throughout the entire course of the program); several assignments of reflective writing in class, in which they sought to integrate new knowledge and construct new understandings of profession and self; and additional assignments of reflection-on-action in which they contrasted their actual in-school behavior with their espoused theories and beliefs as expressed in their educational platform.

These experiences served as preparation for the writing of reflective statements to accompany portfolio entries. Specifically, students were directed to write a reflective statement for each artifact of leadership documentation they selected for their portfolio. Their statement was to contain:

- their rationale for selection of the item,
- their reflection of the impact of the event on the school or environment in which they worked,
- their understanding of its impact on their own professional and personal growth,
- their understanding of the connection between their formal learning in class with their leadership experiences in the field, and
- their understanding of the overall significance of the event or experience described.

By the second month of the program, students were well on their way to developing their portfolios. With enhanced awareness of the kinds of activities they were looking for, they began a process of critically assessing their work in their schools and seizing for documentation those experiences which they believed furthered their formation as educational leaders. A broad range of activities was selected for documentation, including:

- attendance at a national conference on Outcomes-Based Education and Assessment
- chairing of the site-based School Improvement Planning Committee
- participation in the district Math Improvement Action Team
- presentation of suggested changes for the district elementary report card to a group including the district's elementary principals and Central Office
- chairing the district's Language Arts Committee, with representatives from all schools in the district K-8
- directing a multi-district athletic league
- leading parent education sessions
- organizing staff development activities on improving student self-esteem
- presenting at various state conferences
- serving as the acting principal or assistant principal . . .

Each experience served as an opportunity for students to reflect upon their activities and learning outside the classroom, and the significance of these experiences for their own professional growth.

As the students developed their portfolio, they prepared for the third step of the process--the meeting with the program coordinator/instructor to present and discuss their portfolio. These meetings were scheduled at semester intervals throughout the program, and were held a total of five times in individual sessions with each student. To prepare for these meetings, the program coordinator reviewed the portfolio in advance, examining carefully the documentation of each activity/experience and the accompanying reflective statement.

Meetings with students usually lasted one hour. The typical process consisted of the student initiating discussion, describing an entry and commenting on the experience of living it, reflecting on it and writing about it. This served as the basis for dialogue with the coordinator/instructor, and for the unfolding of the process of cognitive coaching. With the actual portfolio leadership experience serving as the focus of the conversation, the coordinator initiated a process of questioning, redefining, and reframing. Alternate possibilities were explored; linkages were made with theories discussed in class, with the student's espoused theories and with the overall mission of the program to develop pro-active educational leaders committed to reform of practice and to the development of inclusive learning communities.

A major component of the meetings with students--and the core component of the concept of cognitive coaching--was the process whereby the coordinator analyzed specific incidents or problems described by the student, making explicit strategic understanding gained through knowledge, research, and lived experience . . . through expertise. Alternative approaches to complex tasks were considered cognitively and metacognitively, and the reasons for selection of the preferred choice were articulated. The role and application of theory to particular situations was explicated. The coordinator's own experiences were brought into the conversation, and provided an opportunity for the articulation of how she had reached certain decisions in the past or solved similar problems, integrating personal beliefs and values, knowledge, theory and past experience.

This served as the basis for a shared process of critical reflection, for a step by step and "mind to mind" consideration of the deepest challenges of educational leadership. Back and forth flowed the dialogue, as new knowledge was introduced and new possibilities were considered. There were questions . . . and explications . . . and then the "aha's". . . In this setting, through a process of collaboration and interaction between student and instructor, focusing on authentic problems of practice, new meanings were constructed and deeper connections were established between the abstract, conceptual knowledge of the classroom and the ambiguous, complex world of real schools.

Description of Research Methods

This research was conducted employing qualitative ethnographic research methods. The purpose of this project was to document the experiences of graduate students enrolled in a cohort school leadership preparation program as they participated in a cognitive coaching process with their program coordinator/instructor focused on the contents of their formative professional development portfolios and their accompanying reflective papers.

A total of seventeen graduate students from three cohort teams of students enrolled in a graduate administrator preparation program were involved in the study. Multiple data gathering methods were used including:

a. the writing of three reflective papers in which students described the experience of participating in the cognitive coaching experiences with their program coordinator/instructor and the impact of these experiences on their personal and professional development over time;
b. individual structured interviews
c. the writing of critical incident reports which captured significant events relating to the impact of the cognitive coaching experiences on their personal and professional growth

All data were analyzed in accordance with ethnographic research standards (Bogdam & Biklin, 1982; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) to identify recurrent themes and patterns and to interpret the multiple dimensions of the lived experience of cognitive coaching when connected to documented leadership activities and accompanying reflective papers.

Findings

Through analysis of the data, four major themes were revealed, relating to how students came to view their work, their learning, and their emerging new professional identity. The process of participating in multiple cognitive coaching experiences one-on-one with the program coordinator around actual experiences in practice led to:

- deepening of understanding, creation of meaning and integration of metacognitive analysis
- enhanced linkage between theory and practice
- openness to exploration of complex problems of practice in safe environment
- redefinition and reaffirmation of self as developing leader

1. <u>Deepening of understanding, creation of meaning and integration of metacognitive analysis</u>

> When we met together to discuss my portfolio, it was very powerful. . . it went much deeper, because I had someone saying, "Now, tell me about that, . . . why did you do this . . . what else could you have done," . . .because I had to not just think about something and be reflective but actually verbalize it, and that was very reinforcing because I was talking out loud to somebody, but it was not to somebody who might not have any more insight than I, but someone who could ask the right questions and ask the questions to make me think about the practice on a deeper level.

The process of bringing student and instructor together with the explicit purpose of examining leadership behavior in practice added immeasurable richness and depth to the entire preparation program. The nature of the learning process was

transformed, as both participants assumed new roles--one, that of apprentice practitioner, trying out new behaviors in authentic settings, testing, stumbling, proceeding, trying to assess what was called for, and what resulted; the other, that of master practitioner and coach, seeking to enter the world of the novice and then to guide thinking toward new questioning and new understanding.

Each set of transactions between the two was a unique story, situated in a particular context and focused on a problem or challenge embedded in that environment; each student had her own tale to tell. Yet, what emerged from these opportunities for shared reflection and analysis was new understanding by both, the product of a dynamic explication of hidden meanings and significance.

> I believe the whole process pushed me to a great degree to go beyond what I had written in my reflections. At our meetings, we took the reflections to depths I never considered, What started out as a simple, one issue reflection really was much more and had greater significance. I thought meeting with you for the purpose of reviewing my portfolio was the single most important and powerful component of my administration program. I was forced to focus on my own thinking in a metacognitive manner. When I engage in future reflections, I now have the thinking in place to be much more analytical.

For one student, new understanding developed not only about the problems of practice but about core aspects of her own personality and leadership style. A district language arts coordinator, she described her interactions with others throughout her district--teachers and supervisors whose participation and support were essential for the achievement of her goals. Through the gradual process of guided analysis and consideration of what was--and was not--happening, she gained new understanding of the motivations and behaviors of others, and of herself.

> It's giving me my voice--helping me to organize and see what's really happening. I can feel the growth within myself. I can see how much I am starting to reflect on everyday issues, what happened here, what do I know, what can I do to be better. You know, I have always been a kind of independent person and I am beginning to find out that it is not always good to be too independent. You have to show that you need the other person. They have to feel needed sometimes, and I recognize that this is one of the things that I am working on now. You become your own diagnostician and you acquire new tools. . . it empowers you to be a more effective problem solver.
>
> I listen to the kinds of questions that you ask that force me to think more deeply. If I'm talking about the idea of participatory management or participatory leadership in my building, when we have our meeting, you force me to think about, if I were responsible for an entire building, how could I make that transfer to change the culture to a more participatory one, to one more like a learning community.

One student just completing the program was similarly able to "step outside herself" and review the impact of the cognitive apprenticeship process.

> When I talk about how well grounded I feel. . . that has really developed this last year . . .I attribute a lot of it to our time together talking about what's in my portfolio. It forces people to become reflective, to think about their practice in their own setting, and to transfer, and it's the transfer piece that makes me such a good interviewee now when I'm applying for a principalship. When I'm asked questions about what I've never done before, I'm not lost in my answers, because I have thought about the transfer, and it comes fairly easy for me.

For one student, the stages of learning and "meaning-making" became perfectly clear. For him, the journey progressed from solitary reading, to writing, to focused conversation with his instructor, and from pure cognitive knowledge to deeper, experiential knowing, .

> First I read it, that's the beginning. Then, when I write about it, I see it in a different light and therefore I have new learnings. Then when we talk about it, and you help me see the many layers or the different possible frames, then it's the "aha"! First, I had self-dialogue; then, I discuss it with you, and I come to see it differently. If it's a difficult situation that we're talking about, the emotional angle comes into it. Then, when I have new meaning about it, the emotions fall into place, so that the whole experience gets in the proper perspective. I believe that the emotions support the learning--the cognitive aspect, and that's really what happens when we take it apart and talk about it.

Finally, one student was able to articulate with particular clarity how she had moved from confusion and disconnection to holistic understanding.

> Before, I was fragmented; now it's making sense. Before it seemed like what I did was the thing to do because somebody was telling me to do it. Before, I didn't know what I knew; now I know what I know. I can read the research and know that what I'm learning and seeing is real. I feel more control, I'm more focused. Our time together has made those activities real and given them meaning.

Thus, the process of bringing student and instructor together to examine specific problems of practice grounded in an authentic context served to forge new connections and meanings. By making the hidden known, by explicating and articulating expert knowledge, the instructor was able to guide the student to new awareness of the many dimensions of leadership, to new thinking about alternate frames, perspectives, purposes and possible outcomes, and to deeper thinking about the very process of thinking itself.

Enhanced linkage between theory and practice

In the integration of the formative portfolio, reflective practice and cognitive coaching, the theory of the classroom finds its application in the real world of the student. The learnings of the texts come alive through the process of conversation around authentic cases of school leadership. Through the process of "reading" descriptions of events for their hidden meanings, the instructor applies the knowledge from research and theory to the lived situation as it presents itself in practice. By labeling such interpretations out loud and making explicit the implicit connections between theory and practice, the instructor is able to draw on the authentic school life of the student and the situations presented in the form of a living case study.

For students, this process of explicit linkage served as a powerful reinforcer of the value of "a good theory". One was able to see that in her effort to guide the teachers in her department toward improvement and reform, she was in fact trying to apply the theories of many scholars she had read in class.

> I demonstrate my learning and growth to them in the words I say and in the actions I take. As Roland Barth urged, my job is to be "head learner" and to model it. I live by high professional standards. The lessons that I prepare are well grounded and well thought out. I also practice using research, so I am often demonstrating how to put research into practice. Things don't always go in the direction that I had hoped, so together the classroom teacher and I reflect, propose a theory, and go back into the classroom and try again. When we do that, I think to myself, "Great, we're doing it! We're building a learning community!"

Similarly, a reading teacher/coordinator working at the elementary level came to see that in her approach to the introduction of a new report card, she had overlooked some key earlier learnings in the program, and it had been costly. . .

> We presented to the elementary principals the vision and work produced by our group on the proposed new (report card). It wasn't until I could really feel their resistance that I knew we were in trouble. . . Now I know, I missed the whole piece from Fullan, about how the perspectives and subjective experiences from which the principals viewed the product differed from the teachers. Each group interpreted the reporting system based on the lens through which they were viewing it. It was also the different frameworks from Bolman and Deal. They were dealing with structural issues, like how long it would take to get the new cards printed, and how it would affect a lot of other things that were going on, and we missed it. I think there was also the symbolism that it was teachers who were leading this, and we didn't prepare for the processing of that. We needed to viewed this through multiple lenses. We didn't understand how complex it was to make changes.

Another student described in a more general way how the interactions with his instructor around issues leadership caused him to reflect holistically about the connections between theory and practice.

> When we went to a deeper level forcing me to be reflective not just about the skills and how I could apply them but actually connecting it all to the theory that we were learning in class, I found it very valuable. It made me remember the theory better; it made the theory real so that I could see how it really was applicable in the work that I was doing as a leader and finally, it made me evaluative about my leadership. I don't think you can come away from a meeting and say, what leadership tasks did I do without asking, "Was it effective, how would I do it again?" Taking it apart in our (portfolio) meetings forced me to evaluate, and also tied into the theory because I was constantly thinking, "Does the theory support this, is this the way you ought to treat people, and if it's not, is it successful in this case, and if it's not, then maybe I need to take another look at my practice."

Class discussions about espoused theories and theories in use had been abstract concepts when they had occurred in class. Far removed from the complexities of real schools, and from the forces that drive actions through habit or knee-jerk reaction, students could not explain the leadership behaviors of their own administrators, or the apparently mindless and counter-productive policies and practices that seemed to be in effect in all schools. It was only through deeper exploration, through interaction and discussion with the instructor about some of the students' own leadership behaviors that some of the true challenges emerged.

> Writing about what I've done in the portfolio forces me to think in a very focused way about how the theory relates to my situation. Then when we discuss something I did that involves me acting as an instructional leader, I pull it apart in a whole different way. For example, when we were talking about how I handled the School Improvement Committee, your questions caused me to reflect about how I really treated people, in spite of all the sweet words I mouth. If I am really committed to a human resource approach to people, then I really have to "walk the talk". I'm not sure I did that then. . . One of my big "aha's" in this process is that it's linking that theory and practice. It's one thing to sit in class and theorize, and we need to do that, but it's another aspect of the job to get into it and use it, and then figure out just what was really going on that you didn't even realize or see at the time.

Suddenly, all the research on reflective practice acquired new meaning. Theories were no longer research merely "out there", apart, separate, disconnected. Rather, a new understanding was shaped--based on experience--of the usefulness of theory to inform practice, guide behavior and serve as a powerful tool for successful leadership.

Openness to exploration of complex problems of practice in safe environment

The process of cognitive coaching may be thought of as simply one approach to teaching and learning. Unlike the traditional classroom environment, this approach involves just two individuals, "one-on-one . . . mind-to-mind". Further, when not only the physical environment is altered, but the psychological tone as well, then the opportunity for high levels of learning is present. In such a private setting of focused attention and concern, respect and trust, both teacher and learner can reach new levels of understanding and growth.

The engagement of individual students with their instructor in just such a setting set the stage for a powerful shared exploration of the students' first attempts at leadership. The door was closed . . . attention was fixed . . . and the conversations began. It was only after these meetings, that their true significance for students emerged.

> It was a safe environment to rehearse in. Things happened in that intimate setting that didn't in other ways. To me a critical part of it was your role. Your role was one of support. You asked questions that caused me to think, and that led me through my thought processes. Discussing it with you allowed me to take it a step further if need be, having another point of view, another person's. It was a growth experience, and affectively, it was an enriching experience, but a lot depends on the behavior of the instructor. If a person didn't handle the role sensitively, it could be interpreted as threatening and judgmental, but it wasn't.

This dimension of the personal quality of the interaction between instructor and student in this intimate setting is of particular significance. For most students, the process of revealing their leadership behaviors and their deepest reflections about those behaviors was initially uncomfortable. This reaction was not unlike what one would expect from beginners in any field--on the ski slope, in the computer lab, at the teacher's desk. The smooth flow of the expert may follow, but the initial steps are usually awkward. At this early stage of learning, particularly in a setting of absolute personal exposure, it was essential that an environment of safety was structured. Only in such a setting could authentic learning occur, with open assessment of the quality of performance exhibited and honest review of areas where further work ws needed.

Discussion of this issue with several program graduates confirmed that the safety of the experience removed their fears and permitted them to engage in thoughtful consideration of their actions. In fact, for them, it was the memory of their lived experience discussing and reflecting on their portfolio documentation that served them in subsequent administrative job interviews.

> It was like a rehearsal for my interviews. I didn't know it at the time, but when I found myself in interviews, I could just go back to our meetings. You asked me questions--why; you probed--why did I do this and not that, what were my values, my beliefs, how did they mesh? That's what happened in the interviews, and I could just go right back to that.

And another . . .

> It was safe practice for potential interviews. I score a Low Introvert on the Myers Briggs, and I do process to myself--my writing is valuable for this. But at the same time, I discovered that cementing and validating came from hearing my thoughts out loud when I discussed my portfolio with you. It was a wonderful extension to the writing. I do a lot of self talk and whenver I get out of my head and I talk to somebody about what it is that I'm thinking, it takes it from kind of a surreal kind of concept into something that is very literal, concerete, real; it takes it into a different dimension. I could talk to you and we explored together some of the difficult situations I was in. It was important that I could feel at ease, and that I could talk about those things to somebody who understood both the unuances and the big picture. It was exciting, but at the same time I really felt free to learn.

Redefinition and reaffirmation of self as developing leader

Finally, by participating in multiple experiences in which their initial leadership experiences were privately coached, students came to develop a new definition of self. Gradually, their world as a classroom teacher was left behind. In its place emerged a new being with a developing sense of new possibilities and promise. For students, the opportunity of being able to experience individualized guided practice with their expert practitioner/mentor served as a pathway to their own professional transformation. Their strengths were confirmed, their weaknesses diagnosed and addressed; their specific problems of practice were strategically evaluated, dissected, reconstructed and reevaluated. The hidden processes of analysis, problem-solving and decision-making were elaborated and revealed.

> When we met, it was affirming to be able to go through and articulate my work with you and receive support. I'm an auditory learner, so that speaking about it, hearing myself speak about it helped clarify it for me too. I was ecstatic, I was absolutely ecstatic. It was a wonderful experience because I had been affirmed and supported in my professional growth. Even if there had been some criticism, the way you handled it, it was self learning. It was your role to have me look back again at myself, this time instead of in writing I was doing it auditorally, and that was exciting.

This experience of affirmation and transformation was echoed by other students who vividly recalled specific critical incidents in the coaching process.

> To be perfectly honest, I think the whole issue is validation of what I have done--not just what I have done but the reasons I have done what I have done; what do I value, what are my philosophies, what do I think, what do I feel, how did my actions fit my beliefs. For someone to stop and pay attention to what I'm doing for my personal growth and to have me stop and take the time to sit down with

> someone who is more experienced that I am but who can talk to me from a knowledge and a research base about my efforts validates that what I'm doing is important, who I am is important, what I do in the future will be very important.

For one student, the portfolio remained a physical reminder of the interactions shared with her instructor in the coaching sessions. Just viewing its contents brought to mind memories of the experiences that had strengthened her growth and encouraged her to seek new professional opportunities.

> I used my portfolio prior to my interview to remind me of my strengths and beliefs. After I did not get the job, I returned to it. It helped me realize that there was nothing wrong with me. My beliefs have become solid. Our meetings about the portfolio gave me clarification about what I do best--work with the big picture. I do my best at developing a philosophy based on what is out there and what makes sense, and turning that into something that is very real. I continue to add pieces to my leadership that were not there before. And some day I will find a position where those leadership skills are not just tolerated but sought after and desired.

Further, the portfolio had served as a valuable tool in her preparation for administrative interviews. It had acquired both physical and emotional properties for her, and had served as a focus for her first steps to seek an official position of leadership.

> I cannot speak highly enough of the advantage of being able to look back at my portfolio pieces and then organize my resume. Instead of starting from nothing, I had everything. Perhaps even more important to me is knowing that I have actually accomplished a lot in relatively short period of time. The portfolio documentation gives me actual concrete evidence of my accomplishments. The act of our reviewing together--we examined everything I wrote about--your review in my mind validated me and it affirmed that the activities that I was doing really indeed were preparing me for an administrative role. It helped me to see how my consultant position has given me authentic opportunities to work with people in many administrative capacities.

Thus, for that student, while the preparation program was over, its impact reverberated in her mind and her heart. She had changed, she was a different being--personally and professionally. She had begun her studies as a teacher consultant, and had emerged, in her mind, as a leader. This new mental picture of self was anchored in experiences which redefined and re-affirmed who she was and what she was capable of accomplishing. She was, in fact, a developing educational leader.

SUMMARY

The integration of formative portfolio assessment, reflective practice and cognitive coaching can provide rich new dimensions to administrator preparation programs. By sharing conversation about the leadership behaviors performed in authentic school settings, instructor and student can create powerful new learnings. Specifically, by making explicit the cognitive processes employed by the master practitioner--the strategic steps taken to define, frame and solve problems, by examining alternative options and articulating the basis for selection of the preferred choice, by clarifying the influence of personal and professional belief and value systems, the instructor can move the student to a higher level of integration of theoretical knowledge and practice, and facilitate the transformation to a new sense of self.

On their own, each of the three practices described in this paper can enhance administrator preparation programs. When merged into one integrated, coordinated design, they offer new promises of professional growth, purposeful action and enhanced learning environments for students, teachers and administrators.

APPENDIX A

MARY SMITH

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP

DOCUMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES AND REFLECTIVE PAPERS

SEPTEMBER, 1991 - JUNE, 1992

Item #	Description	Date	Audience	Key Leadership Skill

APPENDIX B

The Connecticut Principals' Academy
PROFICIENCIES OF THE EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL

LEADERSHIP

Defining Direction

1. Exercises vision in defining the school mission and goals
2. Effectively and clearly communicates goals within and without the school community
3. Sets high expectations and standards for attainment of school goals
4. Identifies and analyzes relevant information before making decisions or committing resources
5. Provides incentives to excel for both teachers and students
6. Communicates clearly and persuasively
7. Serves as a role model

Instructional Development

8. Monitors student achievement
9. Collects, analyzes and interprets student and school data to identify areas for instructional and program development
10. Uses knowledge of research in curriculum and instruction to initiate school improvement
11. Evaluates professional and support staff constructively
12. Coaches teachers to enhance their instructional effectiveness
13. Engages in a program of ongoing professional development

HUMAN RELATIONS

Consideration

14. Gives specific and frequent feedback
15. Maintains positive school climate through the use of humor
16. Recognizes and praises the accomplishments of students, teachers and staff

Collaboration

17. Fosters teamwork and collegiality
18. Elicits participation in decision making
19. Facilitates group processes and resolves conflict
20. Encourages participatory leadership on the part of the staff
21. Listens to others

MANAGEMENT

School Program Management

22. Plans and prepares an appropriate budget and manages funds effectively
23. Seeks and allocates appropriate resources (materials, money, time) to support curriculum
24. Implements school programs within the confines of district goals and policies
25. Schedules curricular and co-curricular activities efficiently and effectively
26. Understands and applies knowledge of organizations and community politics in generating support for the school
27. Fosters community support for the school and its programs

Rules and Regulations

28. Identifies norms, guidelines and procedures for school operation
29. Develops clear school rules
30. Develops an effective discipline policy
31. Accepts responsibility for in-school behavior of students, teachers and staff.

General Operations

32. Monitors the overall operation of the school
33. Ensures that the physical plant is kept in good order
34. Protects instructional time
35. Maintains a visible presence in the school

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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